

Genital Herpes Facts

An estimated one of every four Americans has genital herpes, caused by herpes simplex viruses type 1 (HSV-1) and 2 (HSV-2). Genital herpes is more commonly caused by HSV-2.

Possible Signs and Symptoms

- *Most people do not have symptoms or have mild, unnoticed symptoms*
- If symptoms do occur, this usually happens within 2 weeks after infection
- Blisters on or around the genital or anal area
- Genital or anal itching or irritation
- Painful or difficult urination
- Swelling and soreness around genital area
- Cuts or sores around genital or anal area
- Infections of the mouth or lips, "fever blisters"
- Flu-like symptoms (fever, sore throat, swollen glands)

Transmission

- Oral, anal, or vaginal sex
- Infected mother to newborn during birth

Prevention

- Abstain from oral, anal, and vaginal sex
- Use of latex or polyurethane condoms or barriers during oral, anal, or vaginal sex decreases risk if the infected area is covered by the barrier
- Maintain a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested for herpes and you know is uninfected
- If a partner does have genital herpes, communicate with them about their outbreak symptoms and any anti-viral medication they take. Avoid sexual contact during an outbreak and use latex or polyurethane condoms or barriers at other times

Treatment

- Examination and tests by a health care provider to diagnose and determine best course of treatment
- There is no cure for herpes, but anti-viral medication can prevent and shorten outbreaks. Certain medications also may lower the risk of transmission to another person.

Complications/Effects if Left Untreated

- Increased risk for HIV infection
- Recurrent painful genital sores
- Fatal infections in newborns if left untreated during pregnancy

If You are Infected . . .

- Refrain from sexual contact (oral, anal, or vaginal sex) if you have symptoms/an outbreak
- Learn about herpes, pay attention to your outbreak patterns, seek support from local groups or web sites
- Use latex or polyurethane condoms or barriers for sexual activity (oral, anal, vaginal) when you do not have an outbreak
- Seek medical attention, including STD tests, and discuss the best course of treatment with your health care provider
- Make sure all your recent sex partners are notified of their exposure to herpes and talk to new partners about it

For more information about STDs or about testing and treatment in New Jersey, please call the HIV/STD hotline or visit our web site:

1-800-624-2377

<http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/stdhome.htm>

